

CHRONICLE AND COMMENT OF THE STAGE



Violet Heming in "Three Faces East." CAMPBELL STUDIOS, PHOTO



Dorothy Mack Kaye
in
"Head Over Heels"

Plays and Players

Will Deming, the chubby comedian who furnishes the comedy in "Where Poppies Bloom," at the Republic Theatre, made his first stage appearance as a singer with the Thatcher, Primrose & West minstrel show, at Hooley's Theatre (now known as Powers's), in Chicago. How he succeeded in obtaining a hearing for Billy West's presence in the lobby of the Hooley playhouse, where Deming was sweeping the lobby of the theatre that Mr. West heard him sing the favorite songs of the year. The voice struck Mr. West's fancy, and he made Deming put down the broom and join his minstrel show.

Here his theatrical career came to life. Finishing a two-year singing contract with the minstrel show, Deming's first speaking part was in "The Power of Money," in which Edmund Collier, uncle of William Collier, was starring.

The following season found Deming a member of the Hess Juvenile Opera Company, which had for its repertory the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. His salary while playing with that company was \$100 a week, the largest salary paid to a boy. But as time rolled on Deming became too old to play boy parts and too young to play juveniles, and he had to make the best of it on an \$8 dollar a week salary, which was paid him by a barn-storming repertory company in which he played an old man one night and a boy the next.

For two seasons he was a member of the Lincoln J. Carter stock company, which at that time was one of the leading producers of the 10-20-30 melodramas. London found Deming a producer, where he produced and played in "The Tornado," which was a success for many months in the music halls of London. After selling the production to a London producer, Deming came back to America with \$7,000 in his credit. It might be interesting to note that he was the only producer in those days that ever came back with so much money.

Under the William A. Brady management Deming played in Chicago the roles that Douglas Fairbanks played in New York, and this routine had been followed for five years.

The following year he co-starred with Burr McIntosh in "The Man from Mississippi," which toured the country from coast to coast. He replaced John Barrymore in "The Fortune Hunter" and played the William Collier role in "Nothing But the Truth" in Chicago. His later appearances were in "It Pays to Advertise," "Over the Phone" and "Parlor, Bedroom and Bath."

Gretchen Hartman, the original in the part, and then, because she was still so young, left the stage to study more. A few years later she appeared as a solo dancer at the Palace Theatre in London and at the Tivoli in Paris, and also in some of the Scottish cities, and then came back to America and played the title role in "Peg o' My Heart" for two seasons, and in the leading ingenue roles of "Fair and Warmer" and "The Very Idea." In the latter piece she was considered one of the most pleasingly successful of "baby vampires."

Miss Mackaye is one of several players in "Head Over Heels" with Mitzie now making their first appearances in musical comedy. Gertrude Dallas and Edmund Gurney being two others hitherto seen only in dramatic works, but Miss Mackaye thinks she knows when she is welcome and has decided on a glorious career in music plays.

Dorsha, the dancer, now appearing in "The Passing Show of 1918," began her career with a novel stroke of fortune. She had danced ever since a child, and when fifteen the desire to really do something and to go on the stage became so intense that she threw up her course at the Finch School, and, knowing no one even remotely connected with the stage, started out at random for a manager's office. She happened into the Century Theatre, where the Liebler production of "The Daughter of Heaven" was then playing, and as it just happened a girl in the company had been taken sick the night before the manager engaged her on the spot. A few weeks later luck was still with her and she was presenting the solo dance, which she subsequently took on tour, winning remarkable notices.

But it hasn't always been so easy, and Dorsha will tell you she has done her share of hard work, too. The following year she was a chorus girl in the Winter Garden, while she continued her studies.

Since then she has appeared in vaudeville with Ruth St. Denis and brother St. Denis, with Pavlova at the Hippodrome, with Roshanara on tour, and with Roshanara again in "Sinbad," and with the Coburn production of "The Imaginary Invalid," in which she gave a striking and remarkable Moorish dance.

Dorsha's work has also been seen at several big benefits, including "The Macdougall Alley Festa," "The 'Chu Chin Chow Ball,'" "The Italian Festa," "Stage Women's War Relief Benefits" and others.

Vaudeville
PALACE.—Lucille Cavanagh in a dancing act is next week's headliner. The Morton Family is out in force on this bill. Sam and Kitty of the first generation and Martha and Joe of the third are united in a farce called "Then and Now." Paul Morton and Naomi Glass of the second generation are in a musical satire, entitled "1918-1956," and Clara Morton does a solo act. The Avon Comedy Four remain for a second week.

ALHAMBRA.—There are three headliners—Clifton Crawford, Trixie Friganza and T. Roy Barnes. Others on the bill are George McKay and Otis Ardine in a skit called "All in Fun," Mary Cranston in "A Brittany Romance" and Kerr and Weston.

COLONIAL.—Eddie Leonard, the popular minstrel, is the star feature. On the supporting bill are the Duncan Sisters in songs, Bert Baker in a farce entitled "Prevarication," Florenz Ames and Adelaide Winthrop in a thumbnail revue, Cooper and Ricardi in a skit and Mitchell and King in imitations.

ROYAL.—The headliners are Trixie Friganza and T. Roy Barnes, and the war play "Maid of France." Rae Eleanor Bull and brother in a musical offering, Elida Morris, the "Lyric Lady," and Bert and Lottie Walton are some of the other features.

RIVERSIDE.—Eddie Foy and the younger Foy will be seen in their new act, "Slumwhere in New York." Gus Van and Joe Schenck appear for a second week. Juliet presents "A One Girl Revue," and Bob Matthews & Co. in a comedy, the Wilton Sisters, and the Levovels are a few of the acts on the same bill.

LOEW'S SEVENTH AVENUE.—Anna Chandler tops the bill here the entire coming week. The photoplay programme is "The Source" and "The Source" and war news.

At the One Week Houses
STANDARD—"Turn to the Right" comes here next week. Ruth Chester will be seen in her original rôle, and Mike Donlin will play the part of "Slippery Muggs."

SHUBERT-RIVIERA—Stuart Walker's production of "Seventeen," from Booth Tarkington's stories, will be seen. In the cast are Lillian Ross, Ruth Gordon, Judith Lowry and Burford Hampden.

LOEW'S SEVENTH AVENUE—"The Very Idea," a farce by William Le Baron, begins here on Monday night.

BRONX OPERA HOUSE—"The Man Who Stayed at Home" is next week's attraction.

Brooklyn
MAJESTIC—"Yes or No," a play in three acts, prologue and epilogue, will be given here with the original New York cast.

MONTEAU—"The Boomerang" is the bill here for next week.

At the Cabarets
"The Camp of the Allies" is the entertainment at Thomas Healy's, Broadway and Sixty-sixth Street.

The new revue at the Palais Royal is called "The Spice of Life." Frances Demarest and Mizi Gizi are the stars of "Folly Caprice" at Fabs's Harlem Casino.

Leon Gordon

By Rebecca Drucker

Leon Gordon is a dark, fascinating and accomplished gentleman. So much is apparent from seeing "Watch Your Neighbor," in which he shines not only as actor but as author. As I pulled on my rubbers and hunted for my umbrella I pitied the other poor ladies who had to go out into the gloom of a rainy Wednesday afternoon merely to rejoin their families, while I remained for an exhilarating interview with the clever Mr. Gordon. Undoubtedly he would say many brilliant things that would look well in print.

Then I went behind stage, where misanthropic stage hands glared at me and the sunrise of the last scene lay pathetically prone—past a narrow passage into Mr. Gordon's dressing room. Once inside and facing him squarely, I became slowly aware of the fact that Mr. Gordon was not so debonair off stage as he appeared to be on. Was it—could it be—diffidence? An actor and diffident! But perhaps he only needed a little drawing out.

"Where did you get the idea for your play?" I started brightly, drawing him out.

Mr. Gordon was amiable, but vague. "Why, out of my head."

"And didn't know any pacifists or spies?" I asked, leaving him a significant opening, as one who should say: "Think now, think. Perhaps you have mislaid the memory of a few of them."

But Mr. Gordon was not to be lured into a flight of fancy. "I'm awfully sorry," he said contritely. I sighed.

Pending Mr. Gordon's recovery of spirits, one could always resort to the second rate method of extracting information by direct questions.

By this method Mr. Gordon disclosed that he belongs to an old English theatrical family. His father, C. F. Lilly, managed the Drury Lane Theatre for many years. He absorbed plots and situations with his infant food. As a result he has a trunkful of unacted manuscripts, a novel and a nameless volume of one-act plays to his credit, besides the present play. He came to this country a few years ago, and, excepting a short appearance in "The White Feather," he never made an appearance in New York until he came here in his own play.

When "The White Feather" was made over into "The Man Who Stayed at Home" it was sent to Boston, with him in the leading rôle. It made a record run there of seven months, and when it finished he remained there with the Henry Jewett Players. "The Man Who Stayed at Home" was a war play, and it was while appearing in that that he was infected with the desire to write a war play. "Watch Your Neighbor" unfolded itself before him, and with his collaborator he got it written down in three weeks. They sent it to Mr. Morosco, who had no previous acquaintance with either of the authors, and he sent an offer of a contract in twenty-four hours.

Throughout the rehearsals Mr. Gordon said he kept up his spirits pretty well, but on the night of the opening he had a most acute case of double funk—one for himself as playwright and another for himself as actor. He would have given anything to be going on in some one else's play. If the critics said he was a bad actor he could not blame any one for miscasting him or not writing him a part to fit. He had cut off all his defences. And it was practically his first appearance in New York. He wonders the anxiety of those few hours didn't turn his hair gray. As it is, he says he thinks he knows what shell shock is. Ever since he woke up in the morning and found that New York had accepted him and his play he has been in that dazed condition. That is why he is so diffident.

I gathered up my things and rose to go. But just as I turned away Mr. Gordon had a rush of spontaneity. He said: "I think reporters are wonderful. They just see a person once and then they go home and write all about him."

Girls at Hip Break Horses And Like It

Training horses for France is the newest rôle of the Hippodrome chorus girls. France in this instance is the France of the spectacle of the fight at Chateau Thierry which closes the first act of "Everything" at the Hip. In it are sixteen horses racing across the front of the stage dragging heavy field artillery. And it is these horses that the twelve girl riders, Louise Owen, Lena Llorett, Alice Nash, Edna Nash, Lone Love, Gilva Orme, Helen Sube, Ida Lemuels, Emily Buss, Miriam Sanford, Lily Clarens and Georgia DeDrew, from the circus act at the Hippodrome, are helping to train, under the expert direction of Dr. Martin J. Potter at his stables, 156 East Thirtieth Street.

Heretofore the doctor, who is in charge of the Hip menagerie and is one of the best known animal experts in the country, has always used men in his training stables. Owing to wartime conditions he was up against it for assistance in getting the horses ready for the Hippodrome spectacle, for it takes from eight weeks to three months to train a horse to race on a treadmill, and each horse must have a double to take his place in the performance in case of emergency.

In this dilemma the Hip chorus girls came forward to offer some much needed help. All of them are expert riders, two being former bareback performers from the real circus. Every morning they go for an hour to the stables in Thirtieth Street and work with the horses, and "Doc" Potter, who was a little dubious at first over the success of the experiment, is so enthusiastic now that he declares his one worry is that some of the corps will get married and leave him flat.

At the beginning most of the horses are in terror of the treadmill, and it is "Doc" Potter's experience that many of the girls are more successful in quieting them and handle them with a lighter, more expert hand than do the men riders. He is prepared to keep the girl workers indefinitely, war or no war.

New Play This Week
TUESDAY—At the Yorkville Theatre, Adolf Phillip will present "Tell That to the Marines," a comedy in English, by himself and Edward A. Panton. Mr. Phillip will play the leading rôle, that of a foreign citizen whose allegiance is doubted, but who proves his loyalty. In the supporting cast are Cecil Kern, Georgia Lee Hall, Marie Port, Elsie Smith, Philip Lord, Albert C. Winn, Jack Bernard and others.

Stage News and Notes
The weekly theatrical newspaper, "Variety," which is usually very accurate in its estimates of business at the box office, says that "Three Faces East" is now the second most popular play in town. "Friendly Enemies," according to "Variety," is first and "Lightnin'" third in popular favor.

The Russian Ballet is appearing at the Coliseum and attracting big audiences.

"Jonathan" Says Adieu
"Jonathan Makes a Wish" closed at the Princess Theatre last night.

ended September 14. "The Better 'Ole," which is to be seen here, at \$19,000. "The Naughty Wife," which was only moderately successful in New York, continues to please the Londoners.

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